

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 PC-01 IO-13 EB-08
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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1193

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 2091

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IN
SUBJ: INDIAN POLITICAL SCENE AT DEATH OF INDIAN
PRESIDENT

1. POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY AND UNEASE HAS BEEN GROWING
IN THE LAST WEEK, FOLLOWING THE DEFECTION FROM CONGRESS
PARTY OF JAGJIVAN RAM AND OTHER FORMER CONGRESS LEADERS.
THE ALLOCATION OF NOMINATIONS FOR SEATS FOR CONGRESS
POLITICIANS HAS TAKEN A SHARP TURN IN THIS PERIOD WITH
THE YOUTH CONGRESS AND SANJAY GANDHI VIRTUALLY EXCLUDED FROM
PARTICIPATION WHILE OLDER POLITICIANS AND SITTING MPS
HAVE BEEN RENOMINATED (SEPTEL). THE POLITICAL INITIA-
TIVE HAS SEEMED TO LIE MAINLY WITH THE OPPOSITION PARTIES
RATHER THAN THE PM. SHE HAS REPORTEDLY TOLD CONGRESS
CANDIDATES TO REFRAIN FROM STARTING THEIR CAMPAIGNS EVEN
WHEN THEIR OPPONENTS ARE KNOWN. HE OWN REMARKS AT
REPEATED MEETINGS WITH VISITORS AT HER RESIDENCE HAVE
SEEMED EXTREMELY DEFENSIVE AND FLACCID. PEOPLE WHO HAVE
MET HER IN THE LAST WEEK DESCRIBE HER AS RELAXED AND UNFLUS-
TERED, OR TENSE AND RATTLED, APPARENTLY DEPENDING ON THE
DAY OR EVEN THE HOUR. THE DEPARTING GERMAN AMBASSADOR DOUND
HER IN THE LATTER STATE LAST WEKEND; THE NEW UK HICOMM FOUND HER THE
FORMER ONLY A FEW MINUTES LATER.

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2. IT IS GENERALLY AGREED THAT CONGRESS PRESIDENT BAROOAH,
HIMSELF BITTERY ANTI-SANJAY AND A VISCERAL "LEFTIST", HAS
SINCE EARLY THIS WEEK TAKEN AN INCREASINGLY ACTIVE ROLE
IN ASSESSING CONGRESS CANDIDATES AND APPROVING CANDIDATE
LISTS. A NUMBER OF CONGRESSMEN BELIEVE BAROOAH MAY HAVE
WARNED MRS GANDHI THAT IF ANTI-COMMUNIST CANDIDATES ARE

NOT SCREENED OUT OF THE LISTS FOR UP AND BIHAR, SOME PROMINENT LEFTIST CONGRESSMEN MAY LEAVE THE PARTY. THERE IS SOME CREDIBILITY TO SUCH A WARNING AND THE DEPARTURE OF MINISTERS SUCH AS K.D. MALAVIYA, CHANDRAJIT YADAV, WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER RAY OR BAROOAH HIMSELF WOULD BE DRAMATIC AND DAMAGING. MANY OF OUR SOURCES SUSPECT THAT THE FAILURE OF PARTISANS OF RAM AND UP FORMER CHIEF MINISTER BAHUGUNA TO LEAVE CONGRESS THUS FAR IS LESS A REFLECTION OF THEIR LOYALTY TO MRS GANDHI THAN THEIR INTENT TO REMAIN WITHIN CONGRESS AS "TROJAN HORSES" UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTION AND THEN USE THEIR WEIGHT TO BARGAIN WITH OR EVEN OVERTURN MRS GANDHI. THE DEPARTING GERMAN AMBASSADOR THIS WEEK FOUND FEW SENIOR MINISTERS WILLING TO COMMIT THEMSELVES ON THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTION.

3. THE GENERAL APATHY AND SENSE OF LOSS OF MOMENTUM WITHIN CONGRESS HAS PRODUCED WIDE SPECULATION THAT THE ELECTION MAY BE VERY CLOSE. EVEN IF CONGRESS WINS, THIS SPECULATION CONTINUES, THERE MAY BE A DANGEROUS PERIOD OF REAL OR THREATENED "CROSS-OVERS" FROM ONE PARTY TO ANOTHER WHICH AT WORST COULD CALL INTO QUESTION THE STABILITY OF THE GOI AND AT BEST WOULD WEAKEN EITHER MRS GANDHI'S OR AN ALTERNATIVE PRIME MINISTER'S FREEDOM OF POLITICAL ACTION AND MANEUVER.

4. SOME POLITICIANS BELIEVE THAT MRS GANDHI, FINDING HERSELF ON THE DEFENSIVE, MAY EVEN BE ENCOURAGING THE KIND OF ATTITUDE DESCRIBED ABOVE IN THE HOPE THAT HER BEST CHANCE TO RETURN WITH A SUBSTANTIAL MAJORITY LIES IN
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AROUSING A POPULAR FEAR OF INSTABILITY AND UNEASE ABOUT THE ABILITY OF AN OPPOSITION TO GOVERN. OTHERS WONDER WHETHER MRS GANDHI IS ENCOURAGING THE KIND OF ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH SHE COULD MOVE TO DELAY THE ELECTIONS ALTOGETHER. MRS GANDHI HAS YET TO "MAKE HER MOVE", AND THERE ARE FEW INDIAN POLITICIANS WHO WOULD UNDERESTIMATE HER ABILITY TO BRING ABOUT A MAJOR REASSESSMENT OF THIS SITUATION IN THE COMING WEEKS.

5. THE PRESENT SENSE OF UNEASE DERIVES MAINLY FROM CONFUSION AND DIVISION WITHIN CONGRESS RATHER THAN REAL MOMENTUM FOR THE OPPOSITION. FOR ITS OWN PART, THE OPPOSITION FACES THE MOUNTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE STRONG "LEFTISTS" WITH WHOM JAGJIVAN RAM LEFT THE CONGRESS (SUCH AS GANESH, SATHPATHY, AND BAHUGUNA) AND THE STAUNCH ANTI-COMMUNISTS OF THE JANATA PARTY (SUCH AS MARARJI DESAI) WHICH HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO SURFACE.

6. DESPITE THIS GENERAL ATMOSPHERE, THE SECURITY SITUATION

TION IN AND AROUND DELHI AT THIS POINT SEEMS NORMAL. BORDER SECURITY FORCE ELEMENTS WHO WERE HERE UNTIL EARLY IN THE WEEK FOLLOWING THE REPUBLIC DAY PARADE HAVE NOW ALMOST COMPLETELY DISPERSED. WE ANTICIPATE SOME ADDITIONAL DELHI POLICE AND CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE DEPLOYMENTS IN THE AREA IN THE NEXT TWO DAYS IN ANTICIPATION OF FOREIGN DIGNATARIES AND SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PRESIDENT'S FUNERAL. WE WOULD JUDGE IN ADDITION THAT INTELLIGENCE, INTERNAL SECURITY, AND MILITARY UNITS AROUND THE COUNTRY HAV BEEN PUT ON SOME ALERT STATUS FOLLOWING THE PRESIDENT'S DEATH.

7. THE DEATH OF THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF THIS MORNING DOES NOT APPEAR TO US TO ESSENTIALLY CHANGE ANY OF THE POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS DESCRIBED ABOVE.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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